

Christmas at the Botanics 2018 – FAQs

CATEGORY	QUESTION	ANSWER
<p>General</p>	<p>What is <i>Christmas at the Botanics</i>?</p>	<p>Following a highly successful first year, our 2018 winter trail returns with over a million twinkling lights and plenty of new things to see. Enter a world festooned with seasonal cheer as you wander beneath unique tree canopies and alongside iconic Glasshouses drenched in Christmas colour. New for 2018, the winter trail is a place where fairy-tale meets fantasy. Glowing larger-than-life incandescent flowers rise high into the night sky leading you on a path towards illuminated tree sculptures with delicate beads of light clinging to each branch. The trees will be magnificently lit up, including the much loved conifers, which RBGE is working hard to conserve for future generations.</p> <p>There are hidden surprises too – watch out for shards of light, frosty snowflakes, stars and baubles, marching reindeer and gingerbread men where you least expect to see them. Amid all the festive fun don't forget to glimpse Santa and his elves along the way. Surround yourself with playful ribbons of colour-changing globes and stop at the scented Fire Garden for a moment of tranquil reflection. In the distance spot the towering Cathedral of Light festooned by over 100,000 pea-lights. No Botanics trail would be complete without the Inverleith House Festive Finale where brightly coloured projections dance in time to much-loved Christmas classics.</p> <p>In addition to the illuminations visitors will also be able to enjoy seasonal food and drink at the event in John Hope Gateway Visitor Centre and food and beverage stalls situated at intervals around the trail. Late night shopping will also be available in the RBGE shop.</p>
	<p>When is it on?</p>	<p>Friday 23 November – Sunday 25 November Wednesday 28 November – Sunday 2 December Wednesday 5 December - Sunday 9 December Wednesday 12 December – Sunday 16 December Monday 17 December – Sunday 23 December Monday 24 December – Saturday 29 December <i>Christmas at the Botanics</i> is not open on Christmas Day.</p>
	<p>What are the times?</p>	<p><i>Christmas at the Botanics</i> takes place after RBGE has closed to the public at 4.00pm. Gates then open for <i>Christmas at the Botanics</i> at 4.40pm.</p>
	<p>Where does it take place in the Garden?</p>	<p>The illuminated trail follows a one mile loop on the paths of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.</p>

General cont/	Who is it suitable for?	<i>Christmas at the Botanics</i> is suitable for everyone – to be enjoyed equally by groups of all ages or family members to enjoy together.
	Should I arrive in advance of my visit time?	No, you only need to arrive at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh at your chosen visit start time.
	Which Gate to I come in?	There are two entrances for <i>Christmas at the Botanics</i> . You will be able to choose from the West Gate entrance on Arboretum Place (EH3 5NZ) or the East Gate entrance on Inverleith Road (EH3 5LP). If you are travelling by car to <i>Christmas at the Botanics</i> , please choose to arrive by the West Gate where there is more on street parking available.
	Will I miss out on any of the trail if I come in at the East Gate Entrance?	No, we have designed the trail with the two entry Gates in mind. Whether you join at the main entrance at the West Gate Entrance or at the East Gate entrance, you will be able to enjoy the trail to the full. If you do enter by the East Gate, do ensure you enjoy the full trail and leave by the East Gate.
	I am visiting the Gardens during the day. Will I have to leave the Gardens before entering again for the evening?	Visitors can dwell in the John Hope Gateway Visitor Centre after the Garden has closed and before <i>Christmas at the Botanics</i> opens.
What else is on offer at Christmas at the Botanics?	Can I buy food and drink? Which restaurants will be open?	Yes, the Gateway Restaurant at the West Gate visitor centre will be open from 24 November on Saturdays and Sundays only. Reservations can be booked in advance via SEE Tickets. The Terrace café and the East Gate Lodge will also be open throughout the run for hot drinks and snacks. In addition, there will a number of seasonal food and drink chalets serving seasonal hand-held food, catering also for younger visitors. Hot chocolates, mulled wine, roasted chestnuts will also be on offer. Visitors can also toasting marshmallows at one of our purpose-built fire pits.
	What shopping facilities are there?	The Botanics Shop is situated in the West Gate Entrance and will be open during <i>Christmas at the Botanics</i> until 10pm. Customers who are not attending the event can also shop here until 10pm.
Tickets	When do tickets go on sale?	Monday 4 June – Priority Booking for Membership Friday 8 June - Tickets go on general sale.
	Where can I buy tickets?	Online Christmas at the Botanics website – www.rbge.org.uk/christmas Telephone Phone – 08716207051 Calls cost 7 pence per minute plus your network access charge. In Person From 8 June - tickets can be purchased by debit & credit card at the Botanics’ John Hope Gateway. No charge for tickets purchased and collected in person at the Gateway or at the Usher Hall.

Do I have to book in advance?

Yes, we recommend early booking. Each timed entry has a limited capacity and the early evening and weekend slots are likely to be extremely popular. Any remaining tickets will be available to purchase at the Information Desk at the John Hope Gateway Visitor Centre (at the West Gate, Arboretum Place) from 4.30pm on the day but we cannot guarantee that the slot for which you wish to book will have availability.

On *Christmas at the Botanics* evenings the John Hope Gateway Visitor Centre Information Desk will close at 4.00pm and re-open at 4.30pm; it will remain open until 8.15pm, 15 minutes after the last timed entry to the trail at 8.00pm.

How much do tickets cost?

Entry tickets for *Christmas at the Botanics* :

PRICING

PEAK

	ADVANCE	ON THE DAY
Adult Non-member	£16.00	£18.00
Adult Member	£14.00	£17.00
Family	£48.00	£55.00
Child (4-16)	£10.00	£12.00
Under 4s / Carers	Free	

OFF PEAK

	ADVANCE	ON THE DAY
Adult Non-member	£14.00	£16.00
Adult Member	£12.00	£15.00
Family	£42.00	£50.00
Child (4-16)	£8.00	£10.00
Under 4s	Free	

For tickets booked via rbge.org.uk/christmas: £2 per transaction for print at home tickets, £2.50 for tickets sent by first class post. Tickets can be purchased by debit & credit card at the Botanics' John Hope Gateway. No charge for tickets purchased and collected in person at the Usher Hall.

See rbge.org.uk/christmas for further information and full terms and conditions. On the day prices apply from midnight on the day prior to your visit.

The schedule has been divided into the following peak and non peak days:

Fri 23-Nov	OFF PEAK
Sat 24-Nov	PEAK
Sun 25-Nov	PEAK
Wed 28-Nov	OFF PEAK
Thu 29-Nov	OFF PEAK
Fri 30-Nov	PEAK
Sat 01-Dec	PEAK

		<p>Sun 02-Dec PEAK Wed 05-Dec OFF PEAK Thu 06-Dec OFF PEAK Fri 07-Dec PEAK Sat 08-Dec PEAK Sun 09-Dec PEAK Wed 12-Dec OFF PEAK Thu 13-Dec OFF PEAK Fri 14-Dec PEAK Sat 15-Dec PEAK Sun 16-Dec PEAK Mon 17-Dec OFF PEAK Tue 18-Dec OFF PEAK Wed 19-Dec PEAK Thu 20-Dec PEAK Fri 21-Dec PEAK Sat 22-Dec PEAK Sun 23-Dec PEAK Mon 24-Dec PEAK Wed 26-Dec PEAK Thu 27-Dec PEAK Fri 28-Dec PEAK Sat 29-Dec PEAK</p>
	I'm a Member of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh – do I get a discount?	Yes. £2 off advance ticket bookings and £1 off tickets when booked on the day (after midnight that day) Your discount is valid for your whole transaction.
	When does the “on the day” ticket price start?	On the day prices apply from midnight on the day prior to your visit.
	Can I book a ticket on the day?	Book on the day online at the Botanic website rbge.org.uk/christmas or at See Tickets: www.seetickets.com - there will also be tickets available at the Information Desk of the John Hope Gateway Visitor Centre.
	How many people is a family ticket valid for?	The family ticket is valid for 2 adults and 2 children.
	Is my ticket for <i>Christmas at the Botanic</i> valid for entry to the Glasshouse in the daytime?	No , you will need to purchase a separate ticket for entry to the Glasshouse: adults £6.50, conc. £5.50, children 15 and under free prices including a small donation to the Garden). Last entry to the Glasshouses is 3pm, with the Glasshouses themselves closing at 3.30pm. Visitors can dwell in the John Hope Gateway Visitor Centre until the first trail at 4.40pm. Please note that all daytime visitors will need to depart when the Garden closes at 4.00pm then re-enter at 4.40pm for <i>Christmas at the Botanic</i> . They can dwell in the John Hope Gateway Visitor Centre during this period.
	Can I leave tickets for collection at the Information desk?	If you're leaving tickets for collection by other members of your party please leave these at the John Hope Gateway Visitor Centre Information Desk at the West Gate entrance. Tickets for collection will be available from 4.30pm on the day of your event. RBGE takes no responsibility for tickets left for collection.
Groups	I would like to arrange a group visit to <i>Christmas at the Botanic</i> – is there a group rate for this?	There is a group rate of 10% off groups of 10+. Please call SEE Tickets on 0844 412 4650 .
Ticket queries	If I am delayed and miss my slot can I join a later slot?	Yes, we will accommodate you on the next slot but please be aware of the last entry times. (See below)

	I have tickets for the last slot - but am late - what are the last entry times?	Last entry for ticket holders for both the West Gate and the East Gate is 8.30pm. There can be no admittance after these times as we begin to close down the trail.
	I have booked the wrong date. Can I transfer my ticket to another date?	No. We have tried to make it very clear on the website and at the point of booking that you need to make sure that you have chosen the right date and time slot at the time of making your booking as we are not able to offer exchanges or refunds once tickets have been purchased.
	I have lost my ticket? What Can I do?	RGBE, RGL and its ticketing partners See Tickets, Ticketmaster, Usher Hall and are unable to offer refunds/duplicates on unwanted/lost tickets
Practical questions about the trail	How long is the trail?	Approximately 1 mile.
	Are there toilets on the trail?	There are toilets situated at the West Gate and East Gate entrances, at the Terrace Cafe and at the Fernhouse Toilets (in the centre of the Garden). There are accessible toilets at all these locations.
	Can you take dogs on the trail?	Guide dogs and registered assistance dogs are allowed within the Gardens. Other dogs are not allowed.
	What is the route for the trail?	The trail runs in a circular loop using the paths of Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.
	Is the trail covered?	No - all visitors are reminded that this is an outdoor event and the weather may be inclement. Please wear appropriate outdoor clothing and footwear. We reserve the right to refuse inappropriately clothed patrons access to the walk, if it is felt they are open to greater risk of injury.
	Is the trail dark?	In some areas the lighting will be low level as this is part of the experience. We do encourage visitors to bring along a torch in case of an emergency – this should not be used unless it is necessary.
Parking	Can I park at the Garden?	There is no parking on site but parking is possible on the roads around the Garden and we strongly advise patrons to park nearby. Weekend parking is free. If coming by car, please select the West Gate entrance at time of booking. Please do not park close to the East Gate. This entrance is intended for use only by visitors arriving by bus or on foot.
Public transport		If you are attending the trail by public transport, we recommend you select the East Gate Entrance at time of booking. Lothian Buses will be running a special Christmas service. We will update these FAQ's with this information when it is announced by Lothian Buses.
	Is there a dedicated drop off & pick up area?	There is a dedicated drop off and pick up area outside and to the left of Arboretum Place (EH3 5NZ).
Access provision	What provision do you have for disabled guests?	The trail will be created to be as accessible as possible within the context of the natural site of the Botanic. The route is all on hard standing and alternative routes will be provided should they be required for customers with mobility issues and information will be provided for guests who may suffer from ill effects of lighting sequences. Staff

		<p>will also be on hand to help with a moment of a particularly steep incline.</p> <p>The John Hope Gateway Visitor Centre has two wheelchairs to hire and eight motorised scooters but these must be booked in advance. The easiest way to book a mobility scooter is by calling 0131 248 2909.</p> <p>Accessible toilets are available at the West Gate entrance, East Gate entrance, at the Terrace cafe and at the Fernhouse Toilets.</p>
	Do you have parking spaces for disabled people?	Yes, there are four spaces directly outside the West Gate Entrance on Arboretum Place (EH3 5NZ).
	Is the illuminated trail accessible for wheelchair users?	<p>The illuminated trail is approximately 1 mile in length .</p> <p>The route is designed so that it can be viewed solely from tarmac flat paths, some interactive elements may invite the audience on to grass where additional pedestrian matting will be provided. Staff will be on hand to help with a moment of a particularly steep incline.</p> <p>If weather conditions mean that the trail is not fully accessible for people using wheeled mobility aids, consideration will be made on a case by case basis to allow tickets to be transferred to an alternative date when the ground conditions are more appropriate.</p>
	Can I bring my own mobility scooter?	Yes you can.
	I note that there may be strobe lighting in the Illuminated Trail. Will there be white strobe lighting? Will it be possible to detour from the trail to avoid the strobe lighting and rejoin the trail further along?	There will be lighting sequences created within the lighting design that will have some flashing lights contained within them, however, these will not be strobe lighting. We have worked to guidelines on photosensitive epilepsy and will adhere to the industry standard of synchronising effects and locking the sequences to ensure that lights do not operate at more than 5 flashes per second.
Guidelines for Photographers	Can you take photos on the trail?	<p>You are able to take photos and we encourage you to share these on twitter, facebook or instagram with the hashtag #christmasatthebotanics.</p> <p>Amateur photographers visiting <i>Christmas at the Botanics</i> are invited to capture their experience on cameras and smart phone for personal use and share it via social media. If using photography equipment and tripods please adhere to the following guidelines to ensure that you do not obstruct or diminish the enjoyment of others at the event:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please stay on the designated route of the trail during your visit, and do not stray too far away from the path. • Persons, equipment, materials or stools must not cause damage to plants and the Garden environment. • Please do not impede the movement, access or view of other visitors to the event with tripods or other equipment.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All equipment and any litter or waste material must be cleared away immediately after the photography is completed. • RBGE shall not be liable for loss of or damage to your equipment or possessions or be liable for damages, compensation and claims resulting from the photography. • In severe weather, RBGE reserves the right to cancel any photography activities and the event itself. • All photography for press or online publications should be credited to the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, the Botanics or <i>Christmas at the Botanics</i>. <p>Photography for commercial purposes is strictly prohibited.</p>
<p>Cancellation / Inclement Weather</p>	<p>What will happen if the weather is bad? Will the trail be cancelled?</p>	<p>Inevitably bad weather can affect any open-air event. If we have to cancel the event as it unsafe to proceed, visitors will be offered an alternative date/time. No refunds will be offered simply if the weather is inclement. <i>If the decision is to taken to cancel, it will be made at 2pm on the day and bookers will be notified by email. Ticket holders for the evening in question will be offered an alternative date/time. Customers will be contacted by their ticket agent with details of how to reschedule. Customers are advised to check the website rbge.org.uk/christmas for the latest updates.</i></p> <p>If the event is cancelled by us due to bad weather and patrons are not able to attend an alternative night offered, then a refund will be considered on a case by case basis. We can also offer tickets for the following year.</p> <p>If we are not able to offer visitors an alternative night, we can also offer tickets for the following year. Failing this, refund will be offered.</p> <p>Where a refund is due, the ticket must be returned within 28 days of the event due date. The transaction fee is not refundable under any circumstances.</p>
<p>Sustainability</p>	<p>Light Pollution</p>	<p>The trail will be architecturally lit by experienced lighting designers who have developed sensitive ways of working through heritage and landscape settings over the last 7 years.</p> <p>Responding to the natural darkness of sites is key to the success of these events. The best visual work is sensitive to light “competition” and the brightness of one light source relative to another. We therefore take advantage of the environmental darkness to reduce the overall brightness of our lighting interventions, and allow ample space within our audience experiences for people’s eyes to attune to the darkness, then to allow them to appreciate the sights and sounds of the natural environment as a contrast to, and context, for our artistic efforts. We try to avoid continuous lighting of trails and paths, and will only use audience area lighting where it is absolutely necessary for reasons of public safety.</p>

	Noise Pollution	Sound installations are created to provide atmosphere and a sense of feeling for an installation. All sounds are targeted and specific to a part of the route and are therefore contained within defined spaces, therefore there is no noise pollution over and above the natural sound level created by the presence of audiences on the trail.
	Fuel Usage	Fuel for power generation will be kept to a minimum by efficient use of power loadings and low wattage lighting units where appropriate
	Is it not quite wasteful having all these lights on in the Gardens at night? Is this festival sustainable?	<p>Consideration for the event’s sustainability has been built into the planning process for the delivery of this event, the end result of which we hope will be to inspire and engage new and existing visitors to RBGE.</p> <p>Our trail designers, Culture Creative, have been appointed on the strength of their experience of working in environmentally sensitive ways in heritage and landscape settings.</p> <p>Specific attention is given to power, and where possible we are using RBGE’s mains power. Where generators are needed, these are carefully specified and operated to ensure the most efficient fuel usage. Low wattage lighting units will be used where appropriate on the trail.</p> <p>Culture Creative’s design ethos is to take advantage of the environmental darkness to reduce the overall brightness of their lighting interventions, whilst maximising the effects of their artistic efforts.</p> <p>Continuous lighting of trails and paths will be avoided, and we will only use audience area lighting where it is absolutely necessary for reasons of public safety.</p> <p>Care will be taken to ensure that <i>Christmas at the Botanics</i> takes into consideration the neighbours who live in the roads adjacent to RBGE.</p>
Ecology	How will the trail impact on the wildlife?	<p><i>Christmas at the Botanics – Ecological Impact Statement</i></p> <p>Introduction</p> <p><i>Christmas at the Botanics</i> 2018 is the events second year at RBGE, following a successful launch year. This event takes place in the evening after the Garden’s normal closing time with the main feature being an illuminated trail around the Gardens, with retail/catering points around RBGE’s two existing commercial areas, John Hope Centre and Inverleith House.</p> <p>The event will run from 23rd November 2018 until 29th December 2019 but will not be open every night. It is intended to open on 30 non-consecutive nights during this period from 4.40pm until 10pm. Up to 4,500 people per night are anticipated with arrivals, each bringing 500-600 people, split between two entry points and staggered by timed entry tickets, 30 minutes apart to maintain comfortable spacings. Each round tour of the trail is expected to take around 90 minutes but, once in, visitors may spend as long as they wish up to the closing time.</p> <p>The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) is an internationally renowned centre of excellence in plant biodiversity research and biodiversity conservation. It provides habitats for a number of species of plant and</p>

animal, this temporary event must be considered both from the standpoint of RBGE itself and in relation to surrounding sites.

Method

In order to assess the likely impact of this event both a desk study and walkaround surveys have been conducted. The route proposed for the trail, are walked and checked on a regular basis alongside horticultural staff within the garden, this is an ongoing process and will be constantly checked as the design of the event progresses.

General comments

This event has been planned and will be installed, by private company, Culture Creative. Culture Creative specialises in events of this kind which are often in sensitive venues with high biodiversity and important historical heritage. Its staff have valuable experience in minimising any negative impacts which might be anticipated and are eager to work with staff at RBGE to meet and resolve concerns which arise. This company has designed, installed and managed similar events at Royal Botanical Gardens Kew, Blenheim Palace and properties belonging to English Heritage, National Trust for Scotland and National Trust.

The duration of this event spans the end of November to the New Year, the time of year in which there is least wildlife activity. Many protected species such as bats and amphibians should be hibernating. These are unlikely to be affected unless the event passes directly over their hibernation sites. The earliest bird nesting activity is to be expected from February onwards but all the equipment will have been removed well before then. In addition it is open for a maximum of five hours only each night, and with 2 rest nights on three out of the five weeks of operation. These restrictions on the open nights and times will reduce any impacts upon wildlife particularly as evening events are common within the gardens and resident wildlife has adapted to the existing level of disturbance.

Lighting trail

The majority of the power used for the trail will come from existing hard power distributed throughout the gardens. Generators will only be used to supplement this power if absolutely necessary. If used, the generators are very quiet and will be inaudible from the trail and from any wildlife habituation. The power will be carried using approximately 1.5km of cabling which has been used previously in sites with wildlife populations with no adverse effects. Much of the lighting will be floor based to highlight trees. The trees form part of the cultivated collections at RBGE and their welfare is paramount as part of the planning of this event.

Flora

All parts of this year's route are on hard surfaces i.e. paths. The route passes through areas which are well-walked by visitors daily and does not take in any sections of grass with sensitive wild floras, so no impact upon RBGE rich wild flora is to be anticipated from this event.

Birds

The Pond is an area where a number of birds have the potential to roost. Design of the sound installation has been discussed and modified to minimise any potential for damage to birds.

Reptiles and amphibians

		<p>Smooth or Common Newts are found here but should be hibernating away from the water at this time of year. There should be no impact from this event upon reptiles or amphibians.</p> <p>Badgers The route passes close to potentially active setts, but not close enough to have any adverse effect on the badgers underground. It is quite possible that visitors will glimpse them since the badgers are to some extent used to public presence in the evenings and are very inquisitive. To protect them from ingesting unsuitable foods it has been agreed that badger-proof bins will be provided at the catering points and any litter put into them at the end of each open evening. The material to be used for the fire displays in the Fire garden and fire pits is soya wax and charcoal respectively.</p> <p>Bats Whilst there are no known bat roosts along the illuminated trail route, every care will be taken to ensure that any potential bat roosting holes in trees are not lit directly to avoid any potential disturbance during the bat hibernation season</p> <p>Overview This is a small, tightly contained event, open for limited hours at a very dormant time of year. It is perceived that we do not foresee any adverse effect on RBGE wildlife.</p>
<p>Who is it organised by?</p>		<p>RBGE has partnered up with entertainment promoter Raymond Gubbay Ltd who are well established for producing concerts and live events throughout the UK. They regularly promote concerts and ballet at the Usher Hall and Edinburgh Playhouse. They have also co-produced the highly successful <i>Christmas at Kew</i> and <i>Christmas at Blenheim</i> illuminated light trails.</p> <p><i>Christmas at the Botanic</i>s has been developed in collaboration with Culture Creative, producers of trails that celebrate the heritage and landscapes of stunning locations across the UK. They have previously worked with English Heritage, the National Trust, Forestry Commission, and the National Trust for Scotland.</p>